

FENIAN RAID.

An Open Letter From Arch-
bishop Tache to the Hon.
Gilbert McMicken.

RB199914

ST. BONIFACE, 7th November, 1888.

Honorable Gilbert McMicken,

SIR,—In the daily Free Press of the 11th and 12th May last there was published a paper you had read before the Historical Society, to recall the events of the Fenian raid on Manitoba, 1871.

Being sick at the time, I merely glanced at your effort; some of your statements seemed so extraordinary that I put aside the Free Press to look at it under more favorable circumstances. This week, having a little leisure, I have considered more carefully what you said before the Historical Society, and was forced into the conclusion that your narrative, far from being the expression of historical truth, was in the main opposed thereunto.

If you had not mentioned my name, it might seem strange to see that I meddle in this affair, but as I am repeatedly introduced, surely neither you nor the public can find fault with my correcting statements which I will prove to be unfounded.

I have full recollection of the honor of having been introduced to you on the evening of the 28th September, 1871, at Morris, the then terminus of the St. Paul and Manitoba railroad. I am equally certain that I spoke very frankly with you. Why need you, honorable sir, alter what I did state. You say of me :

“His Lordship, of his own accord, told me that on the previous evening he had met, where he stopped for the night, at McCaulyville, O'Donoghue, and had a long conversation with him.”

I did not meet O'Donoghue the “previous evening” to my seeing you; I never, in

my life, met him at McCaullyville; I had no long conversation with him where we did meet.

These three inaccuracies in one sentence must give way to the truth as follows: I met O'Donohue at Georgetown; I met him two days before I met you; I merely exchanged a few sentences with him and stopped my conversation short, as I perceived at once that he was endeavoring to deceive me, and all this I cited to you. You add :

"I asked the bishop if he saw the friends of O'Donohue referred to, and how many of them these were; also if General O'Neil was with him, In reply he said: There was a stranger with O'Donohue who might be O'Neil;' and as to the number of men, he could not tell how many, but as they walked along they seemed 'a very considerable number', and this, in connection with the state of affairs at home, gave him great anxiety and uneasiness."

Well, sir, these new assertions are also contrary to the facts. I could not, nor did I, speak the way you say. The stranger, whom I saw with O'Donoghue at Georgetown, was not O'Neil, I knew that much; I saw O'Neil at McCaullyville the evening after I had met O'Donoghue with his stranger. I never said that O'Donoghue's friends were a very considerable number, for the simple reason that I had counted all the men I saw from Georgetown to McCaullyville; they were but sixteen (16) in different groups, and I was by no means sure that they were all Fenians, they not having anything by which to recognize them as such.

At McCaullyville, I saw Kennedy, whom I knew long before, who was travelling with O'Neil, and who told me that all their friends were in the different parties I had met during the day. It is evident

that two men at Georgetown, sixteen on the road, two at McCaulyville could not have seemed to me a very considerable number to march to the conquest of a country.

This circumstance, instead of giving me great anxiety and uneasiness, relieved me greatly of such feelings. Still I remained anxious and uneasy, as I very frankly and clearly told you, not with regard to the Fenian raid, but with regard to the conduct of certain parties among the loyalists (?) of Manitoba. Your own narrative justifies such anxiety.

Further on you add :—

“I counselled and entreated His Lordship to return to Fort Garry with me. * * * *
I spoke very candidly and plainly; said he would, if trouble ensued, be looked upon as leaving the country under a full knowledge of the intended raid and insurrection. * * *
and he might take my word for it, it would not be many days ere the Globe of Toronto would express this view of the matter. * *
Between four and five I went to the bedside of the Bishop, and again urged and besought him by every consideration on behalf of preserving the peace and preventing bloodshed to give up his trip to Quebec and return with me. * * *”

If you had an idea of putting on record our conversation, why not relate what I told you, instead of construing your sentences in such a way as to give a decidedly wrong impression? I told you repeatedly that, previous to my departure, I had satisfied myself that there was not the remotest danger of the half-breeds of Manitoba joining the Fenians. I knew there was not even a tendency towards this. It is evident now that you did not believe me then; but, honorable sir, you must admit that I was not to be guided

by ungrounded and unexpressed suspicions, but by my sincere and openly spoken convictions. I was not on a trip of pleasure, on the contrary, I was performing a duty. I knew that, in a real case of danger, the whole population of Manitoba would be united to protect the country. I entertained no fear of an "insurrection," and if you had used the word in my presence I would not have allowed it to pass undenied. I had told all this to Governor Archibald, in my taking leave of His Honor, and I had, besides, promised him surely to retrace my steps should I satisfy myself (not others) that there was a real danger to the Province from the outside. Two days before I left St. Boniface Hon. Messrs. Royal and Girard, Revs. G. Dugast and Forget, with seven others, arrived from St. Paul. The fact is, I had delayed my departure to have information from them with regard to the rumors about the Fenian raid. The travellers had seen nothing and nobody, the most universal quiet prevailed between St. Paul and Pembina; all the noise about Fenians was concentrated in Winnipeg and Ottawa, with very vague rumors in St. Paul. Men of the respectability and experience of those I have just mentioned manifesting no apprehension, I determined to leave. The twenty individuals I had met, almost without arms, without ammunition, store or equipment, could not startle me with such a fear that all my convictions would be changed. You, yourself, when I met you, knew nothing of the movements of the Fenians; you gave me no information; on the contrary, you received your information from me; how, then, could you expect that I

would change my determination, taken after mature deliberation?

As for what you say about the Globe of Toronto, I am surprised that your usual shrewdness has not prevented you from alluding to what you told me at Morris. This is why I am surprised: First, when acting conscientiously, I am not at all to be influenced by abuse such as that which you predicted to me. Then, why do you refer to your prophecy that the Globe would attack me, when you yourself, immediately after, furnished it with weapons for the attack. You remember, at least I do, that, after the trouble I took to inform you, as fully as possible of what I knew, and of what could serve you under the circumstances, you repaid my obli-gness by writing to some one of your family; making inexact statements with regard to our interview and to the dispositions of the Half-breeds. Your letters were seen by the Globe and furnished it an abundant theme of abuse against me, and, what you had not predicted, against yourself, as anyone may be convinced by looking over the file of the Toronto Globe for October, 1871.

Presuming very lightly that this circumstance is not known, you add:—

“It may be mentioned now that on our next meeting, which was on the 16th January, 1872, immediately after the Bishop’s return, he reminded me laughingly of what saying I had predicted would appear in the Globe. You see it was just so, but it did not make it any more the truth for all that.”

I must confess that I had a little remorse of conscience for having spoken laughingly as you here mention. I thought that after your long experience as a commissioner of police you would have been

able to distinguish between a laugh and a laugh, and that you could not have failed to perceive that I was laughing at the idea that, after prophesying, you had helped the Globe to fulfill the prophecy. I knew then about your letters having been quoted. I had heard public men in Canada giving their opinion on the same, and not in a flattering way I assure you. I could not help thinking that you knew something about all that; I had no desire of being offensive, so I regretted having approached the subject laughingly. Now that you have thought proper to draw public attention to this little incident, you have induced me to tell the whole story.

In the following paragraphs of your paper, speaking of what I had told you, you repeat about the same story that your letter had furnished to the Globe, and you say:

"I was fully impressed by this interview with a conviction that, however insignificant the Fenian force might be, there was a great and immediate danger of the general rising of the French half-breeds."

This is too bad! Why not say plainly that I had told you lies, but that you cleverly had seen beyond. There was not a single sentence, in our interview, to convey the idea that there was a danger of a general rising of the French half-breeds. I had repeatedly and emphatically told you that there was no danger in that direction. I had pointed out to you also repeatedly and clearly where from, in my estimation, the danger was to come. After seventeen years, instead of giving a true version of our interview, you give the false impression which was then on your own mind, and contrary to what I told you. You were not obliged to believe me,

though there were reasons to do me that justice, but every one will admit that you were, and still are, obliged to avoid misconstruing a conversation whose object, on my part, was merely and simply to give you information, which could be useful in travelling in your official capacity; and to post you fairly about matters of which I had a thorough knowledge and of which you could not have exact notions.

Leaving Morris on Friday, Sept. 29th, you reached McCaulyville about sunset, where you say you

"Found comfortable, clean and tidy accommodation; the hostess, an eastern township's woman, cleanly, good-looking, intelligent and possessing a loving and loyal Canadian heart. *

* Immediately after enjoying a hearty and acceptable supper, Mr. Wyllie made me acquainted with our good hostess; what she had told to Wyllie she repeated to me, her intense Canadian loyalty had led her to play the eaves-dropper, while O'Donoghue was closeted with Bishop Tache and repeated much of the conversation that was carried on between them, interrupting her from time to time with trying questions and searching scrutiny, I was convinced, apart from the exuberance of her intense Canadian sentiments, leading her to hasty conclusions, that what she told me was the truth, pure and simple. What the bishop told me she fully corroborated,"

Now, honorable sir, this is unbecoming and ridiculous.

At the beginning of your narrative, you say that you had in your company two men, "trustworthy, both most useful and reliable of my (your) secret service police." Now, please tell me was the "good-looking, intelligent, eastern township "woman" you met at McCaulyville, a member of your "secret service police." The fact is, at all events, she was not reliable, as

far, as least, as you represented her. The Historical society have reason to regret to be served with such fictions instead of being furnished with historical information. It is easy to prove how far astray you are from the facts.

I never at any time met O'Donoghue at McCaulyville, consequently could not have been closed, nor have had any kind of conversation there with him; besides, during my stopping at McCaulyville, the night of the 27th Sept. nobody entered my room, nor did I enter anybody else's room, so, the good looking lady playing the eavesdropper could not have listened to any conversation of mine with O'Donoghue or anybody else. The only person to whom I spoke that evening was Kennedy, mentioned above. I saw him in the public entrance of the hotel when he alighted from the stage, and he is the person who, in reply to my inquiry as to one of his travelling companions, whose particular dress attracted my attention, said ! "That is General O'Neil."

All these little details are in themselves insignificant, but as I had related them all to you on Thursday night, I don't see how you can the following evening have been imposed upon, even by "a good looking "and intelligent woman possessing a loving * * * heart." How could you, under the circumstances, believe that what she had told you "was the truth "pure and simple" !!

I have no idea of how the secret service police is conducted in this Dominion of ours, but if on such lines as these it must be liable to many blunders. To say the least, you made a great mistake in listening to such fabrications and making them the basis of your convictions.

The other incidents of your journey, though interestingly related, do not matter much to what I have in view, so I pass them by and, in your company, this time, I reach Fort Garry, where you arrived the 2nd of October. You went to the Lieut.-Governor and on your inquiry how he stood with the Metis you affirm that he said:

"There was every reason to apprehend rising; that he was doing what he could to operate in them through Fathers Dugast and Ritchot, but that they insisted as a conditions that he would give them a satisfactory assurance that the promise of a full amnesty should be fulfilled at once."

Further on you add:

"Fathers Dugast and Ritchot had daily interviews with him, but they invariably ended by their refusing to urge Riel to enroll with his people unless the amnesty was assured to them."

These different statements of yours are as fictitious as the conversation listened to by the good lady at McCaulyville. Here is the truth: Father Dugast, at my suggestion, paid, after his arrival from Montreal, his respects to the Governor on the 22nd of September and told him the rumors he had heard in St. Paul, to which, however, he attached no importance. The name of Riel and the question of amnesty were not even mentioned, no more than the idea of enrolling volunteers. This private conversation with Governor Archibald on matters of general interest is the only one Father Dugast ever had with His Honor. I have before me the written declaration of Father Dugast to this effect.

Now for Father Ritchot. He is in my house to-day, and has just repeated what he often told me before. The reverend

gentleman had no intercourse whatsoever with the Governor on the subject of the Ferians previous to your arrival in the country. At the request of His Honor he visited him once, but only once, and that on the 4th of October. The official documents give full account of that visit and its consequences. The whole is entirely different from what you assert. The substance of the conversation and its result are summarized in the two following letters:

[Translation.]

“ST. BONIFACE, 5th October, 1871.

“To His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor.

“May it please your Excellency,—In the conversation which I had the honor to hold with you yesterday we both agreed that it was proper to secure the influence of Mr. Riel to direct his compatriots in the present state of affairs, and prevent them taking a false course.

“Upon deep reflection, I take the liberty of remarking to your Excellency that inasmuch as Mr. Riel is in such a position that he cannot act openly as a citizen, I do not believe that he should place himself at their head unless he had some guarantee that his proceedings would be looked upon with favor by your Excellency.

“Consequently, I beg leave to ask of you some assurance which will shelter him from any legal proceeding, at least for the present (*pour la circonstance actuelle*).

“(Signed) N. J. RITCHOT.

P. S.—Being about to leave immediately for my parish, I beg to request your Excellency will kindly give an answer to the bearer, who will at once bring it to me.

“(Signed) N. J. R.”

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, Oct. 5th, 1871.

REVEREND SIR,—Your note has just reached me; you speak of the difficulties which might impede any action of Mr. Riel in coming forward to use his influence with his fellow-citizens to rally to the support of the Crown in the present emergency.

Should Mr. Riel come forward as suggested he need be under no apprehension that his liberty shall be interfered with in any way; to use your own language, “pour la circonstance actuelle.”

It is hardly necessary for me to add that the co-operation of the French half-breeds and their leaders in the support of the Crown, under present circumstances, will be very welcome, and cannot be looked upon otherwise than as entitling them to most favorable consideration.

Let me add that in giving you this assurance with promptitude, I feel myself entitled to be met in the same spirit.

The sooner the French half-breeds assume the attitude in question, the more graceful will be their action and the more favorable their influence.

I have the honor to be, Reverend sir,

Yours truly,

(Signed), H. G. ARCHIBALD,
Lieutenant-Governor.

Rev. Pere Ritchot,
St. Norbert.

So you see the question of amnesty was not raised, at that time; but Father Ritchot very naturally, asked from the Governor an assurance that Mr. Riel and his friends would not be arrested or molested. You know as well as I do, and very likely better, what were the criminal intentions

of certain parties; you are perfectly aware how badly the Metis had been treated in Winnipeg; you cannot but know that one was killed in full daylight, that the murderers, though known, were not apprehended; all that was of public notoriety. No wonder then, that Father Ritchot should ask for some assurance, which would shelter Riel and his friends against their enemies, at least for the time they would be on service (*la circonstance actuelle.*) Your own narrative justifies the natural apprehension entertained by Father Ritchot; you say: "Canadians and halfbreeds were bitterly hostile on both sides," and as for the Governor you add:

"The former Canadians as a whole were malignantly antagonistic; so much so, that he feared that his proclamation would not receive a hearty response from the Canadians."

The Governor in a letter published by order of Parliament of Ottawa, gives another proof of what I affirm. He says: "The difficulty is not among the people of the country, but among the small band of lawless men, idlers and roughs who infest the taverns of Winnipeg. These men have no influence except for mischief, but they may light a flame that would be hard to extinguish."—(Report of select committee, page 154.)

The proclamation issued in the name of Her Majesty was loyally responded to by the whole population.

The distinction made between the English and French speaking sections of the country is malicious and unfair. The document was only distributed amongst the main body of the French two days after it had been made public amongst the English. Consequently the action of the former was retarded by so much. Ex

cuse me for not taking your version of the events; meanwhile, by the light of official documents, let us examine day by day the result of the proclamation, and the facts connected with it:

"3rd October.—Proclamation drawn and approved by an order-in-council, No. 44, was printed and began to be known by the English and the French in Winnipeg and the immediate neighborhood.

"4th October.—Proclamation issued by His Honor, reached all the English settlements but not the French parishes. Great enthusiasm, public meetings and the worst of fears following; but no movement yet made to encounter the Fenians.

"5th October.—Proclamation printed in French, began to be distributed to the Metis, as well as the promise of protection, made by the Governor, against extra loyalists. The same day the Fenians seized Fort Pembina, American troops under Col. Wheaton dispersed the marauders, captured the leaders with the exception of O'Donoghue. In the afternoon O'Donoghue, though well armed and determined, was arrested by French half-breeds and by them delivered to Canadian authorities, as proved by the following letter:

"PEMBINA, 5th October, 1871.

Hon. D. A. Smith, Fort Garry.

Dear Sir,—This place was this morning at 7:30 o'clock taken possession of by O'Donoghue, O'Neil, Donnelly and Curly, who had thirty-five men, also their ammunition and arms; at least what they did not carry off with them. O'Donoghue left his cloak and his overcoat, and since his flight from the Fort has been captured by some of the half-breeds this side of

the line. * * * The French half-breeds of Pembina deserve credit for their prompt action in the affair. * * *

Yours truly,

(Signed)

W. H. WATT."

Observe, when you were listening at Winnipeg, to super-loyalists abusing the French half-breeds, some of them were at the post of danger, risking their lives to arrest the leader of the invaders, and, in fact, through the whole affair they were the sole British subjects who gained any advantage at the risk of immediate personal danger. The same evening lists were completed showing 1,000 men ready to come forward; but, observe the one thousand names were on paper; the lists were prepared in different localities. Very few had moved, and the probability is that many would never have moved if it was possible to avoid doing so. I make this observation not with a desire to minimize their readiness to respond to the appeal, but merely to point out that it takes less time to collect names than to gather able-bodied men, with their equipment, and fit to take the field.

6th October.—The Metis who had not the remotest idea of what had occurred at Pembina, sent positive and reliable assurance of their good-will, and put it into effect, for they began to look for their horses, scattered over the prairie and formed into companies, after their own plain hunting organization. As you see, less talk and enthusiasm, but more decisive action. "Their courage and loyalty appeared (not) far above boiling point," as you complain, that of others did, through their representatives. They did not annoy or trouble you nor anybody else: nor did

they insist upon having arms sent out to them by proxy, but they personally took the trouble of looking after what was wanted and succeeded in gathering a fine body of able men, equipped and partly mounted. At Fort Garry the authorities were also ignorant of the discommodities O'Neil had encountered, so the troops were ordered to leave for the front.

The regulars of the fort, 80 in number, and 120 newly enrolled volunteers formed the main body, whilst 42 French-Canadians and Half-breeds, under the immediate command of a French officer, formed the advance, and would naturally, in case of fighting, receive the first brush. Why, sir, not a single syllable, in your narrative, about this French company, which counted in its ranks men of the respectability of Messrs. Gingras, Marion, Leveque, Roy, Genthon, Dr. Pare, etc., etc., etc.? Why omit completely any mention of them? It is evident that the apparent reason is, because they are French. Your whole narrative seems entirely directed against the French Metis, their friends and their leaders. You abuse them; you misrepresent them; their views, their words, and when they form one-fourth of the volunteers leaving Fort Garry, you ignore them.

You acknowledge that you did not go to the front yourself, because you could not secure a saddled horse; why not add that the French had secured all the saddled horses of the place to form a vanguard? It would have been a true statement of the case.

The troops camped at St. Vital, four miles south of the Assiniboine.

Seventh of October, from St. Vital, the force marched to St. Norbert. There the

commanding officer wrote to the Governor as follows :—

SIR,—“I have the honor to report that having proceeded some four miles on the Pembina road, I encamped for the night near the residence of Hon. T. Hamelin; little further news than we had heard before leaving the fort was to be gained; the French Half-breeds held a meeting in favor of aiding the Government which I am told was most enthusiastic * * *”

(Signeâ)

A. G. IRVINE,
Major.

P. S.—“I desire to mention that all the inhabitants on the road have been most ready in rendering us all aid and assistance we have required of them.”

The inhabitants referred to in the above P. S. of the commanding officer were all French halfbreeds.

The same day Messrs. Riel, Lepine and Parenteau wrote to Governor Archibald as follows:

“St. Vital, 7th Oct., 1871.

“May it please your excellency,—

“We have the honor of informing you that we highly appreciate what your excellency has been pleased to communicate to Rev. Mr. Ritchot, in order that we might be better able to assist the people to answer your appeal. As several trustworthy persons have been requested to inform you, the answer of the Metis has been that of faithful subjects. Several companies have already been organized, and others are in process of formation.

“Your excellency may rest assured that without being enthusiastic, we have been devoted.

"So long as our services will be required you may rely on us.

"We have the honor to etc., etc., * * *

"(Signed.) "Louis Riel.

"A. D. Lepine.

"P. Parcentageau.

"To the Honorable G. Archibald, Lieut.-Governor of Manitoba.

To this the governor caused the following answer to be made:

"Gentlemen, I have it in command from his excellency the lieut.-governor to acknowledge the receipt of your note of this morning, assuring his excellency of the hearty response of the Metis to the appeal made to them in his excellency's proclamation.

"You may say to the people, on whose behalf you write, that His Excellency is much gratified to receive the assurance which he anticipated in his communication with the Rev. Pere Ritchot, and which your letter conveys, and that he will take the earliest opportunity to transmit to His Excellency the Governor-General this evidence of the loyalty and good faith of the Metis of Manitoba.

"His Excellency will be pleased to be furnished, as soon as possible, with a nominal list of the persons in each parish who desire to enroll in active service in the present emergency.

"His Excellency will rely upon their readiness to come forward the moment they receive notice.

"I have the honor to be, gentlemen,

"Your obedient servant,

"(Signed) W. F. BUCHANAN,

"Acting Private Secretary.

"To M. M. I. Riel, A. D. Lepine Pierre Parenteau."

8th October—This day was Sunday and turned out to be a day of great excitement and apprehension. Major Irvine and his troops were camped several miles south of St. Norbert. There and on that day the gallant and cautious officer wrote to the Governor the following letter, the importance of which cannot be overlooked in historical circles:

“CAMP OF ST. NORBERT,
 “3.30 a.m. Sunday morning,
 “8th October, 1871.

“SIR,—I enclose reports just arrived from the front. There is no doubt the Fenians intend making a raid between this and to-morrow night. I will move on in the morning. I shall require reinforcement at once; 150 men; as many drilled men as possible under command of Mr. Bedson, of the jail, he being the most competent man to command that I know of.

“Captain Macdonald will have to remain at Fort Garry. No time to be lost in sending the reinforcements forward with provisions.

“I have, etc.,

“(Signed) A. G. IRVINE, Major.”

Major, now Col. Irvine, was the man who ought to know the position. He had, in a measure, the responsibility of the protection and quietness of the country; and he could not have sounded such an alarm without being satisfied that there was a real danger. Among other sources of information, here is the copy of a letter that a special messenger had brought to the major during the night:

NORTH PEMBINA, 7th Oct., 1871.

"SIR—Bands of men and numbers of strangers from St. Paul and elsewhere are passing and repassing this place and all over; very suspicious looking characters. * * * This boy says that there are several hundred Fenians around here.

"Fulthorpe Hill, Griggs & Co.'s clerk at Pembina, says that the trial may be continued during to-morrow, and after that the probability is tthat the four officers (Fenians) will be liberated on giving cash bonds for their future behavior, which will not deter them from making another raid.

"I believe a strong raid is imminent very, very soon. * * *

"Mr. Hill is of opinion that a strong guard had better be forwarded and stationed here at once. There appears unusual commotion all over.

"Hurry! Hurry!! An attempt will be made on Fort Garry, and especially, if successful here.

"The Half-breeds and Indians here appear to be loyal * * *

"(Signed) P. B. DOUGLAS,
(Customs) Pembina."

The news was promulgated in Winnipeg some time during the day, the excitement was intense, and the fears still greater. You could not lose that chance of making insinuations against the Half-breeds, in rendering them responsible for the anxiety. Instead of stating the true cause of it, you say:

"Meanwhile great excitement prevailed in the then hamlet, the germ of Winnipeg, Fort Garry. Apprehensions were entertained that Col. Irvine and his small force would be gobbled up by Riel and his followers. Rumors ob-

tained that the villagers were to be attacked by a large force of Metis from St. Boniface."

As for rumors there was any amount of them; but why give them in preference to official information which you surely then possessed? Besides do you not see that, speaking as you do, you give the best proof of the falsity of the accusations that you lavish on the French population of Manitoba? You know, and everybody knows, how easy it would have been for the Halfbreeds of the country, if they had been in the least badly disposed, to embarrass Major Irvine and his force when marching in Red River mud or camping at night, or again in the woods of St. Norbert; also what a dreadful effect an attack of one hundred determined men would have made in Winnipeg, during the night. Fortunately for the country and for the lives of many of the revilers, the Metis were loyally disposed. I easily understand the relief you and others experienced when you learned, on Sunday afternoon, that Riel and Lepine, at the head of several hundred able-bodied men, were at St. Boniface, offering their services to the Governor.

Now that your apprehensions are over you insult the same men whose action gave you such comfort at the time, and you say:

"On that Sunday Riel, at the church door of St. Norbert, harangued the people. He told them that their friend O'Donoghue had failed, and it became them to offer their services to the Governor."

This is manifestly an absurd slander. The then Governor of the country, in his solemn declaration before the Parliament of Canada, said: "I am perfectly satisfied that the prevailing impression among the

French, as among the English, was that there was to be a fresh raid, and that the action of the French was not based on the idea that the affair was over, but on the idea that the difficulty still continued. After the affair was over I took pains to ascertain from every quarter the real truth in the matter; I wanted to satisfy myself whether they had acted sincerely or not. I came to the conclusion, as I am convinced, that they believed the raid was not over, and did act sincerely, taking the share of the risks of the invasion."—(Report of the select committee, p. 146.)

I also have taken pains to find out the truth, and I have no hesitation to repeat here that I am entirely satisfied that the Metis acted in perfect good faith.

At first they were some time before believing in the contemplated raid; they did not know much about the Fenians; they were but scantily acquainted with the scares which had prevailed both in Ontario and Quebec. No wonder that the word Fenians, vaguely pronounced, did not immediately make upon their minds the effect it made upon yours. Then, as it is fully proved, they were in such a position in their native land that they could hardly go to Winnipeg, even for their own business, so they thought it better for them to remain at home. Nevertheless, the moment they were reliably informed that their services were required by proper authority, with the assurance that they would be protected, by the same authority, against the hateful designs of the local enemies of their race, they did not hesitate in coming forward. If the raid had continued you may be sure that the invaders would have had hot work with

the hunters of the plains, who were then well armed.

You inform your hearers that: "On Sunday forenoon the raid was a thing of the past." Yes, absolutely speaking, it was a thing of the past on Sunday forenoon, just as it was a thing of the past on the previous Thursday afternoon, but in neither circumstance was the future known, as in both it was apprehended that something more would come; official documents clearly prove this. The fear, and you know it, was as intense on the Sunday as it was on the Friday. The men offering their services that day were as sincere as those who started for the field on Friday.

For the sincerity of their action, I am happy to be able to prove it by a letter of the Hon, Gilbert McMicken himself written to his family on the very evening of that same Sunday. My source of information on this, is our common friend, the Globe. After abusing me on the strength of a quotation from one of your letters the great journal in its leader of the 24th October, 1871, has the following paragraph: "Poor Mr. McMicken sends another letter, of date 8th inst., in which he says: 'The half-breeds have now pronounced themselves, and are out to defend the country! and 50 of them are under my immediate command as mounted scouts, etc. They are splendid looking fellows, and thoroughly true.'" I may leave to the author of this letter to reconcile its contents, written on the very day of the move, with his own actual words: "The move on Riel's part was a hollow mockery."

Your paper makes reference to a cir-

cumstance which I would have preferred not to unveil, but you allude to it in such a way that I cannot allow it to pass unnoticed.

After the raid was a thing of the past at Pembina, the troops, French and English, crossed the Assiniboine. You say: "This valorous force, with the temerity begotten of the occasion"—Temerity? Yes, if the half-breeds had been badly disposed—"marched, without halting, to St. Norbert." Without halting is another inaccuracy of yours, as they halted and slept at St. Vital. Never mind, the next day they marched to St. Norbert. Here "Pere Ritchot was indebted to the good feeling and watchfulness of Capt. Mulvey for his escape from a danger he little suspected."

Your hearers must have naturally thought that Pere Ritchot was the obligee in all this deplorable affair.

I am sorry, hon. sir, that you chose to make such an allusion and in such a way. You evidently believe what has been freely reported and affirmed, that a number of the newly enlisted volunteers had openly sworn that they would, for a certainty, kill Pere Ritchot if they came across him. When the troops halted at St. Norbert, Saturday noon, Pere Ritchot visited the camp, and you do not hesitate to affirm that if it had not been for Capt. Mulvey he would have been endangered by those you designate as "unswerving loyalists."

If you are correct this time, I beg to thank Mr. Mulvey for having guarded against the murderous intentions of his men, a priest so useful and so generally esteemed as is Father Ritchot.

The good priest invited the officers to

go and have lunch at his mansion. They accepted with pleasure, and no doubt they ate with good appetite. after the fatigues they had endured. I wonder, though, what passed through the minds of those gallant officers while enjoying the genuine hospitality of Pere Ritchot and thinking of the rascality of those of their subalterns who, in the meantime, were plotting the assassination of their host.

Unfortunately the good feelings of Capt. Mulvey and the kindness of the intended victim do not seem to have had a deterring effect; here is what Governor Archibald wrote, and which is published in the report of the select committee of the House of Commons, 1874, p. 140:—

“Our troops camped in the village of St. Norbert, this is Father Ritchot’s parish. After pitching their tents, Major Irvine found out he could not safely remain as he was afraid of his own men committing an outrage, for which he thought he saw them making preparations. The moment he was aware of the danger he ordered his men to strike their tents and march three miles further.”

Permit me to ask you: Supposing, which, I am sure, is impossible, that 20 to 50 French-Half-breeds or Canadians would plot and swear to murder an English Protestant minister, what would be the effect throughout Canada? Surely there would not be ink enough nor type enough in the whole Dominion to print the horror and hatred inspired, I do not say, against the intending murderers, but, in fact, against the entire Catholic population, bishops, priests and laity. Indignation meetings would be held in all parts; floods of anti-popery speeches poured forth

as well as threats of revenge, perhaps a special service established as a memorial of the plot; and moreover, we Papists we would loudly condemn the criminal intentions.

As there are too weights and too measures, an attempt against a French Catholic priest is viewed differently. You believe that a number of English speaking volunteers had plotted to assassinate a member of my clergy, and you introduce the subject before a learned assembly by the already cited euphemism. "Pere Richot was indebted to Capt. Mulvey for his escape from a danger he little suspected." So after all, those French Catholics, as well as Father Richot, are queer people, having kept silent over the whole affair! Not even expressing their gratitude!

From you, not a word of censure or reproach against the abominable intents and efforts of the volunteers! Is that the way the history of the country is to be written? Was I not right, when in our first interview, I pointed out to you from where the danger was to come, and who those were who were to be dreaded within the country? I may safely leave it to unprejudiced men to satisfy themselves if all the accusations contained in your paper were not misdirected.

With regard to your blaming the Lieut.-Governor for what you call the "memorable handshaking" permit me to express my opinion on the subject. Out of all the ungrounded attacks against Hon. A. G. Archibald, the meanest in my estimation, is the one you now repeat for his having shown a little courtesy to the Metis and their leaders on the 8th October, 1871. When it was thought that the

province of Manitoba was in danger the governor issued a proclamation; and you claim the merit that he did it in compliance with your advice and assurance. The proclamation commanded in the name of Her Majesty, enjoining all British subjects "irrespective of race or religion, or of past local differences, to rally around the flag, to select their officers etc., etc." Not satisfied with this general call, the governor made it a point to invite in a special and explicit manner, the leaders of the halfbreeds to "rally to the support of the crown and to come forward." This desire of the governor was that of the whole sound population; it was yours also: yes, every sensible man was desirous and even anxious that Riel, Lepine and the rest of the Metis should come to relieve the public mind from very strong apprehensions. Your wishes were complied with; the call of the representatives of Her Majesty was answered by the Metis; they enlisted, they selected their officers, who opened correspondence with the governor; this one accepting their services and inviting them to keep ready. Ready they were, and they came forward to have their troop reviewed. After all this you seem to suppose that the governor ought to have been silly and mean enough to openly despise those who were ready to fight and to die for the throne and the crown. If their blood was pure enough to be spilt for the honor of the flag, surely their hands were not unworthy of a shaking. Sir Geo. Archibald may with satisfaction review his administration of Manitoba. He, very likely, is not much disturbed about his hand having touched that of those he had called to protect the country; especially when he is sure that

his most rabid accusers were among those who plotted the assassination of Pere Ritchot. No doubt you believe as I do that: 'Murder in will is murder in deed.' What now about certain repeated shaking of hands, which took place before marching to St. Norbert and after returning from thence?

To finish, you give an episode which forcibly brings to mind the Latin axiom used by students of natural history, in *cauda venenum*. Yes, your hurtful disposition is clearly exhibited in your last slander. Fortunately there is no need for me taking the trouble of refuting it; the Hon. J. Royal, now Lieut.-Governor of the Northwest, having in the Morning Call of Winnipeg, of the 21st May last, sufficiently defended the Metis his co-mounted scouts against your malicious, unfounded and even inconsistent last aspersion. Before coming to a conclusion, allow me to assist you in avoiding what you seem to regret, when you explain that your "narrative had been necessarily more personal than you wished for the difficulty of reference to official documents." Here are some of the documents, to which any person can refer, to form a true idea of the facts we view in such different light:—

1. Proclamation of the Lieut.-Governor after the raid, 13th October, 1871.

2. The "History of a Year," prepared by the Governor and published in the Weekly Manitoban of the 30th December, 1871.

3. The speech from the throne at the opening of the Legislature of Manitoba, January 15th, 1872.

4. The address in answer to the speech

from the throne, by the Legislative Council and Assembly, January 16th, 1872.

5. The 'Report of the select committee of the House of Commons at Ottawa, April, 1874, with the solemn declarations of—

- (a) The Hon., now Sir George Archibald.
- (b) The Hon., now Lieut.-Governor J. Royal.
- (c) The Hon. Senator M. A. Girard.
- (d) The Reverend Father Ritchot.
- (e) The Most Reverend, the Archbishop of St. Boniface.

6. The resolution proposed to the Parliament of Canada by the Hon. Alex. McKenzie, Premier, 1875.

The vote of a large majority of the House after long debates on the aforesaid resolution, 1875.

These are some of the official and important documents which are easy of access to any one, and which ought to be consulted in reference to what has occurred during the Fenian raid, 1871.

In conclusion it seems evident to me that, in spite of all your efforts, you have not proved a single fact, nor even a single word, which could be reasonably charged against the half-breeds of Manitoba, in connection with the Fenian raid, 1871.

In that connection, I remain,

Your obedient servant,



ALEX., Arch. of St. Boniface, O.M.I.

P. S.—Two reasons have prompted me to write as I have now done. First: Being a member of the Historical Society of Manitoba, I am very sorry to see, as it is often the case, anti-historical productions trying to shelter themselves under the shade of our society, to give vent to sectional prejudices and manifest falsities. My second reason is the desire to help

well-meaning people to be on guard against one thing which is of a nature to do harm. in our common country. Such products as the one I have exposed nourish bad tendencies, distrust and all that is contrary to the mutual respect and consideration that the different groups of our population ought to entertain one for the other. I thought I owed to the good feelings which prevail among educated classes, the explanation I have given above, as I hope that our pleasant intercourse is not to be marred by the unjust and shameful antagonism sometimes displayed against the French Catholic population of Manitoba. Many think that we have been treated in such a way, from some unexpected quarters, that it would be proper to raise the voice and prove that contempt of others is not always the result of reliable information nor of a high education. The task is not difficult in itself, but it is always painful, when one is not addicted to the practice of vulgarity, to come down to the level of those who revel in abuse and mendacities, even with the object of refuting them.



ALEX, Arch. of St. Boniface.

